

Note for the Record

**Field visit to Women's Organizations under BRACE BRSP
Districts Pishin and Qilla Abdullah**



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Introduction

I visited BRSP head office and two districts i.e. Pishin and Qilla Abdullah in which the BRACE programme is being implemented. I met with women and men field staff, women members of COs and VO. I also attended a women's Community Management Skills Training (CMST). Field observations and related recommendations are as follows.

Report

The purpose of the visit was to support BRSP colleagues in mainstreaming gender related activities in BRACE. For this, meetings were held with women's community institutions in districts Pishin and Qilla Abdullah. I visited one CO in Pishin and two WVOs in Qilla Abdullah. I also attended a women's CMST to observe the effectiveness of the recently revised CMST module by RSPN. The three-day visit included meetings with senior BRSP management and women community organisations in District Pishin and Qilla Abdullah. The names of BRSP colleagues met are as follows:

1. Abdul Rehman, Senior Manager Amin and Human Resource
2. Naseebullah Jan, Manager Amin and Human Resource
3. Naseema Salam, Manager Gender and Development
4. Ibrahim Agha, District Programme Coordinator, Pishin
5. Sumaira Jahanzeb, Senior Livelihood Officer, Pishin
6. Saeed Jan, Capacity Building Officer, Qilla Abdullah
7. Aliya Niaz, District Livelihood Officer, Qilla Abdullah
8. Jameel Khakhar, MER Officer, Qilla Abdullah

Support to BRSP GAD Section: I met Dr. Shahnawaz and Naseema (Manager Gender, BRSP) and discussed my field plan. Dr. Shahnawaz requested me to support the Gender Section to finalise the BRSP gender policy and share tools to use in conducting gender analysis of the programmes and projects. He also asked RSPN to finalise gender recommendations for BRSP's HR manual with BRSP's HR manager. Comments and recommendations on the BRSP HR policy are as follows:

Gender recommendations on BRSP's Human Resource manual: These gender recommendations were shared previously with BRSP. The earlier recommendations were discussed with CEO by the HR Manager and will be presented in next Board meeting for approval.

1. The HR manual should have gender sensitive language e.g. page 11 of the manual says "HE, HIM or HIS- Denoting the masculine gender. The manual should include the feminine gender as well".
2. The staff recruitment committee should have a woman representative and gender expert on it.
3. Gender sensitive TORs should be included in job descriptions of all staff. i.e.
 - a. Ensure gender mainstreaming in work
 - b. Ensure gender disaggregated data in the programme /project
 - c. Ensure documentation of gender issues and lesson learnt from the target area (These ToRs can be changed according the job requirement)

- d. Contribute to ensure a gender friendly environment and culture at the workplace etc.
- e. The standard gender indicators to address gender sensitization and mainstreaming should be added in the performance appraisals of staff members. For example,
 - I. Show gender sensitive attitude towards other employees
 - II. Ensure gender mainstreaming in his/her work by including relevant women staff in meetings
 - III. Encourages career development for men and women staff
 - IV. The use of courteous and gender sensitive language in reports, e-mails and general communication with colleagues.
- a. HR manual should describe process of career planning and mentoring for women (and men) staff to ensure women to reach managerial positions at BRSP.
- b. Women should be given opportunities to attend national and international training courses and continuous exposure to other RSPs.
- c. Anti-sexual harassment law and AASHA code of conduct should be part of the HR manual. The employees' contracts should have a clause that BRSP has adopted this law and have zero tolerance for harassment. No waiver should be granted to the accuser other than mentioned in the law.
- d. According to the HR manual women are entitled to maternity leave for the birth of the first two children. In case the staff member has more than two children, she can apply for leave without pay. There is no limit for men staff on how many times they can avail paternity leaves.

Recommendation: Male staff should be entitled to paternity leave following the birth of the first two children. In case the staff has more than two children, he may apply for leave without pay, as per the rules for women staff.

Follow Up: BRSP Gender Manager should follow up with HR Manager to incorporate recommendations in the BRSP HR manual and present these in next Board meeting to be held in May-June 2019.

4. **BRSP Women Field staff, Working in a Tough Environment:** I am impressed and appreciate how inspiring and dynamic women staff working in the districts of Balochistan are. Women SOs are responsible for social mobilization, training and follow up with CRPs and conducting CMST. Their feedback was that working with women is really tough due to cultural barriers. Women's mobility is restricted to their houses. They can't go to the bazar, to relatives' homes or hospitals on their own. Only older women go to funerals in the families. In this situation bringing women to one place for CO or VO meetings is really difficult. The women staff said that once they organise women, the women do not have the confidence to speak about their issues, they don't have awareness about the importance of their role in the welfare of their homes, community and country. Women staff said that when they go to men and ask if they can work with the women, they are often told off. However, they said that they know it's important to work with women and they have to face such comments.

Recommendations:

- a. The support that women staff get from BRSP management and field level colleagues is critical. It is due to this support that they are able to do their work. This support needs to continue to be strong and consistent.
- b. At the field level, women staff and the CO members should have an agenda to discuss in all CO meetings. CAT, for example, is one of the most effective tools for discussion and CI members remember CAT sessions and are eager to act on them. The messages of the CAT toolkit can be used as an agenda for the meetings and some key decisions can be taken based on this, e.g women's role in doing vaccination campaigns, in getting CINICs, in registering as voters, in encouraging women to go to skilled birth attendants, etc. It is only through CI support that women will be able to access these basics of life as citizens.

5. Field visit to District Pishin (Day 2)

On February 12, 2019 I visited district Pishin and met with district and field teams. Pishin district has 53 UCs and 5 Tehsils. According to PSC data there are 50.95% men and 49.05 % population in this district. BRSP has established offices at field offices which has one Senior Social Organiser, Male Social Organiser (MSO), Female Social Organiser (FSO) and a Female Livelihood Officer (FLO).

Progress: The progress of SM teams till January 2019 was as following:

Target CO: 1,175

Achievement CO: 1,050 (430 WCOs) - 40% women COs

Target VO: 195

Achievement VO: 231 (WVOs 70) – WVOs 30%

Target CMST + CAT to Community Institutions = 2,196

Achievement= 36 (15 Women CIs)

In LSOs there are 4 women executive body members out of 11. These LSOs are very new and have only met once to form the executive body. Due to cultural barriers women don't come to LSO executive body meetings. The women members do not meet to discuss LSO matters. These women are also related to the male LSO members.

Recommendations:

- a. The women LSO executive committee members should have a meeting to discuss and present their recommendations to female SOs. Female SOs should present this in the male LSO executive body meeting. Women members should also be encouraged to share their plans in their households, with the men, who are members of the same LSOs.
- b. In this meeting the Women Social Organizer should brief the women on the work and decisions of the men members of the LSO body. The recommendations from women should be a written part of LSO plans and meeting minutes. The Gender Focal Persons in the BRACE districts should ensure this by attending meetings and reviewing meeting minutes. The men SOs need to coordinate with the women SOs for this on a regular basis.

Adult Literacy Training: BRSP has completed a ToT on adult literacy and numeracy skills. District teams are conducting ToTs with 10 teachers per district. To ensure women's participation BRSP is

giving them transport allowance. 10 Adult literacy center in each district and will train 250 women community members in 3 months.

TVET: BRSP is considering to introduce potential products with a value chain approach, which can benefit women CO members and enhance their economic status. BRSP has hired a marketing consultant who is looking into potential value chain products. The district teams during their first dialogue (male gathering) fill a form called 'economic survey' that has some information about what skills women have and what skills they can learn which will help them to earn an income. The DLO shared that after formation of WCOs these economic surveys will be done with women. After the potential products are identified, relevant skills will be imparted. IGG and CIF will be linked with TVET, where possible.

Meeting with women's Community Organization: I met the women's community organisation Jangu at UC Margha, Killi (village) Haleem in Pishin. It was a gathering of 15 women from two WCOs called Zeb and Jangu.

CO Vision: The members of this CO were very active and bold. These COs formed in April 2018 and have held 9 meetings i.e. one each month. There were women and girls from every age group. They said that they sit together to discuss their village issues i.e. water and health facilities. On asking what collective actions they have taken so far they said men don't permit them to go out, which prevents them from working together. They said that they can only forward resolutions for drinking water to BRSP and also share with their male relatives who are also CO members.

Women said that water is a big problem in their village. Women, girls and older women all go to fetch water from the tube well which is far i.e. 45 minutes' walk each way. Women are facing health issues due to carrying heavy water pitchers on their heads and pushing heavy trolleys in which they bring water. Women often have miscarriages, kidney problems etc. There is no health facility nearby. Deliveries are often attended by older women and there is no TBA in the area. Women often died during labor or end up with still-born children. Women said that they often go to other villages where there is water available, to wash clothes. **Women recommended that "if BRSP is giving a drinking water scheme, this should not be given to men's COs. They will use water for their fields and not let us fetch water."**

Savings: This CO have savings of Rs. 20,000 and the manager keeps the saving with her. The issue of keeping savings in homes has been raised. However, it is not possible for women to access banks. Moreover, the amounts are too small and are also used for emergency and other purposes. Hence, ready access to savings is critical for the members. Although this CO has not yet done internal lending, through discussion they explained how the expense of buying crockery for weddings and funerals can be cut down if the saving is used to purchase 'collective' crockery which they can use in turns. It is important that SOs have discussions on the potential use of saving, as women were not aware that saving could be used. After this discussion they said they will identify their needs and start internal lending.

Community Management Skills Training (CMST): The president and managers attended the CMST but don't remember anything about the training. They did, however, recall the Community Awareness Toolkit (CAT) sessions on immunization and health and hygiene. This is likely due to the pictorials used in this training.

Women Field Staff: At the debriefing, BRSP staff said that they were overloaded with targets to form COs and could not focus on CO meetings and their quality. Substantial discussions with women members need to be undertaken, for which time and training of SOs is required. This is an issue for BRSP management to consider. The staff is working in very tough conditions and requires support. BRSP has discussed the possibility of recruiting trainers who will do CI training and this is one option. Whereas the CRPs are trained and attending CO meetings, the SOs themselves require constant guidance, in order to support the CRPs. The Gender Manager at BRSP needs to look into this issue urgently.

6. Field visit to Qilla Abdullah (Day 3)

Meeting with WVO: On the day when I visited Qilla Abdullah it was raining heavily. We met a WVO called Rehman Baba in UC Kulq Badwan and Killi (village) Hameed. It was a VO with 4 members including 2 COs (Mirwais Baba and Rehman Baba. It was the house of a Woman Livelihood Officer (WLO) and her husband who is a Social Organizer. This couple has a baby which they took with them to the field. The WLO said that people use abusive language when they ask them about women's organization. But they said that, as a couple, when they go together to the community they have more acceptance than if the woman officer went alone.

The women members shared that they sit together to discuss their village issues i.e. water, health and education. While sharing other issues they shared that women often die during delivery as they don't get timely treatment. There is no school nearby. Children go to maddrassa's for Quran education. Only small girls go to the maddrassa.

Savings: They don't think about it and have no saving yet. On asking the members said that they will start saving when they need it. A conversation with the CO is needed by SOs, as saving

Community Management Skills Training (CMST): I attended a CMST in which there were 25 women presidents and managers. The trainer was a consultant who was not trained on the new CMST manual and not following required techniques to deliver the CMST. She was reading sessions to the participants from the manual. All participants were unable to read and write and it was clear that they were not absorbing anything. BRSP needs to look into this.

The woman staff member (Livelihood Officer) I met in the field unit office had attended a ToT on the newly designed CMST and was trying to make it interesting for women by using charts, colors, pictures etc. She said that the trainer of ToT wasn't clear on some sessions i.e. social exclusion, identification of opportunities and role of community leaders. She said that there should be more discussion on how these sessions relate to CO, VO and LSO roles.

Recommendation: There should be another ToT on CMST for women and Capacity Building Officers (CBOs) and Social Organisers(SOs). As BRSP has taken on short term staff to train women in villages, it is important that such staff have had RSP experience in the past. This is an issue ie SOs do not have the time to facilitate CMST themselves. BRSP should also organize a ToT for the consultant trainers to ensure that they have the required skills and understand the content. The ToT should have equal number of women and men SOs or the staff who is involved in conducting CMST.

Meeting with women VO members: (Killi Nazim Abdul Malik). I met 8 members from 3 COs. The COs are Zartasha, Malai and Sitra. The formation date was November 14, 2019. The president and managers have done CMST but don't remember anything about it. The FSO showed all the charts they have worked on, to arrive at a vision for the CO. They remember the CAT sessions and information shared with them. These COs are doing savings and have saved Rs. 2500-3000 till now. They shared that they are saving money so they help poor women when they need it for example delivery or wedding etc.

Women CRPs: This is a conservative district for women. Their mobility is restricted to their houses. They are not allowed to go for a job, to visit health facilities or to do a job. This is the reason BRSP is facing difficulty in hiring of women CRPs. As of January out of a target of 72 they have only hired 6 CRPs. This is an issue that BRSP needs to find an answer to. Perhaps, as there are large households, more CRPs can be trained to cover only their immediate households.

Recommendations

1. **HR Manual:** The BRSP Gender Manager should follow up with HR manager to incorporate gender recommendations in HR manual and present to next Board meeting to be held on May-June 2019.
2. **Social Mobilisation and Vision of CIs:** Women's mobilization is in its infancy stage. At this stage staff can ensure that the vision of these CIs should be clear. Staff needs enough time to do so. Keeping women's limited mobility and exposure in mind, staff can share stories of women LSO leaders and activists from other parts of Balochistan and Pakistan who are leading CIs. Activists from other parts of Balochistan can be taken to speak to these new COs. Staff can use stories from the CMST manual, and also videos of activists from other RSP areas and from BRSP and NRSP. The staff should have a written agenda and relevant material to discuss in CO meetings.

Due to cultural barriers it is an achievement of BRSP that women are getting organised. This is the first step in them participating in the programme. For this women SOs and BRSP head office needs to do stronger follow up to put basic things in place eg agenda setting, record keeping, CAT sessions and discussion on their follow-up, etc.

3. **CRPs and CAT:** It was encouraging to see that there were educated CRPs who were keeping records of COs. They are also responsible for disseminating the CAT messages. The Community Awareness Toolkit is an effective tool. The messages in CAT can be a good agenda for CO meetings e.g. awareness of hygiene, vaccination, nikkah and death registration etc. The discussion on these points and any decision related to these should be recorded in the 'Karwai' register.
4. **Women's Participation in LSOs:** The BRSP has decided that exclusively women's organizations can only exist at the CO and VO levels, as women face enormous constraints in LSOs. A discussion was had with BRSP at the time of the design of BRACE on this. The idea of having exclusively women's LSOs was discussed in areas where this is possible. In areas where it is not, it was agreed that there will be a separate 'sub-committee' of women of the LSO executive committee. However, women LSO executive committee members can't sit with male members of the committee and nor do these ones seem to be active. They should have a separate meeting to discuss and present

their recommendations to be included in the LSO plans. In this meeting they should also be briefed about male executive body members' meetings and their proceedings by the woman SO. Although this is important, it will put an extra burden on the Social Organizers. The recommendations from women should be part of LSO plans and meeting minutes.

With regards to separate women's LSOs, the BRSP should enter into a dialogue with communities where it is possible to do this. During the last visit of the EU team to Quetta, on 11th March 2019, a dialogue was held with women CRPs and activists at the BRSP head office in which some of the activists said that this may be a possibility. BRSP would be advised to look into this as well.

5. **CMST and Field Staff as Trainers:** The field staff/ trainers shared that there should be another ToT refresher on CMST. RSPN agreed to facilitate the ToT. The monitoring of CMST trainings in the field is weak. Social Organisers trained as trainers say that they do not have enough time to do the training. BRSP has employed separate trainers for this purpose, although it is not clear how many women trainers have been employed and what their previous experience of the RSPs is. BRSP Gender Manager needs to clarify the strategy on this issue, as quality input into the CIs requires some work. RSPN BRACE staff will support BRSP in this regard.